

process to consider voting rights legislation here on the floor of the Senate next week. The process I used will allow the Senate to consider S. 1 or compromise legislation that is currently being discussed. In either case, our goal remains crystal clear: protect the right to vote, strengthen our democracy, and put a stop to the tide of voter suppression flooding across our country. We will not consider legislation that does not achieve those objectives. The issue is too important.

Republican State legislatures are conducting the most sweeping attack on the right to vote since the beginning of Jim Crow. What is their stated reason for vicious assaults on voting rights? They say it is election integrity.

But listen to these policies and tell me if you think they are about election integrity:

Reducing polling hours and polling places. What does that have to do with election integrity?

Mandating that every precinct, no matter how large or how small, have the same number of ballot drop boxes. What does that have to do with election integrity?

It is saying urban areas should have less ability to vote than rural areas.

No after-hours voting, no 24-hours voting, no drive-through voting.

Requiring absentee ballots to be approved by a notary public.

Making it a crime to give food and water to voters waiting in long lines at the polls.

Allowing a judge or panel of judges to overturn an election.

Allowing a partisan State election board to replace a duly elected county election board if they are "underperforming."

Removing student IDs from the list of valid forms of ID.

Moving the hours of Sunday voting into the evening—which, coincidentally, makes it harder for Black churches to sponsor voter drives after services.

Are any of these policies—I would ask a single Republican on this Senate floor to get up and say any of these policies are dealing with election integrity.

We know what they are doing. They are making it harder for people to vote. And if this so-called voter fraud—election fraud—which we have seen none of in 2020, if they cared about that across the board, why did they aim almost all of their proposals at people of color, at poor people, at young people, at urban people?

We know why. This is not about voter fraud. It is about suppressing the vote, particularly of Democratic-leaning voters. It is despicable. It is anti-democratic. It is what they do in dictatorships—manipulate the vote, instead of counting it accurately.

Georgia, Iowa, Montana, Florida, Alabama, Utah, Arizona, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Indiana, Kentucky, Arkansas—this is where some of these poli-

cies that I just mentioned are now law. They would also be in effect in Texas had Democratic lawmakers not walked out of the chamber in protest. Since the beginning of the year, 14 States have enacted 22 laws—22 laws—to make it harder to vote.

Now, I know what the Republicans are saying. They are saying: Oh, well, we are making it easier to vote but harder to cheat.

But when you look at what they are actually doing, it is perfectly clear that Republicans across the country are making it harder to vote and making it easier to steal an election. They are targeting all the ways that poorer, younger, non-White and typically Democratic voters access the ballot, and they are giving new tools to partisan election boards and unelected judges to interfere with the results of a democratic election—interfere with the results of a democratic election. Does that sound like a democracy? No, it sounds like an autocracy, a dictatorship.

When you lose an election, you are supposed to try to win over more voters, not try to stop the other side from voting. These laws are un-American, autocratic, and against the very, very grain of our grand democracy, which, for immediate partisan advantage, our Republican friends are trying to undermine.

So the Senate is going to debate what to do about these laws at the Federal level next week. In an ideal world, this debate would be bipartisan. Voting rights shouldn't be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue, and in the early days of the second-half of the last century, that is just what it was—bipartisan. But, unfortunately, now it has become totally partisan.

Donald Trump and his Big Lie have enveloped the Republican Party, and they run away from truth and honesty and fairness to just appease someone with authoritarian instincts, Donald J. Trump.

And for all the shame that Republican State legislators have brought upon themselves, Washington Republicans have not covered themselves in glory either. Here in Washington, Republicans have failed to forcefully and repeatedly stand up to the Big Lie that the last election was stolen from Donald Trump. That same Big Lie is fueling these voter suppression laws from one end of the country to the other. House Republicans are comparing January 6 to a tourist visit.

I was within 20 feet of these awful insurrectionists. They were not tourists. They were brandishing sticks and guns and this and that.

House Republicans also fired Congresswoman CHENEY. For what? Telling the truth that Joe Biden is President.

Just yesterday, 21 House Republicans voted against awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the police officers who withstood the attack on the 6th. Are Republicans becoming antipolice? Some of the same Republicans who

falsely accuse Democrats of wanting to defund the police are actively refusing to defend the police.

I wish I could say the Senate was totally different than the House—the Republican House—but here we have a Senate Republican saying that it really wasn't a violent insurrection. We have Senate Republicans refusing to include any mention of the causes for January 6 in committee reports, and the Republican minority mounted a partisan filibuster against an independent, bipartisan Commission.

That is what is happening in the present-day Republican Party: a hornet's nest of conspiracy theories and voter suppression in the States and a Washington Republican establishment that is too afraid of Donald Trump to stand up for our democracy with conviction.

So look, we Democrats wish the voting bill would be bipartisan. By all rights, it should be. But the actions in State legislatures like Georgia, Iowa, and Florida were totally partisan. None of these voter suppression laws were passed with bipartisan support—not one. Washington Republicans seem dead set against all remedies, whether it is S. 1, some modified version, or the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which Senator MCCONNELL has recently opposed. So the idea that we can have some kind of bipartisan solution to this partisan attack on democracy befuddles me. Regrettably, the Democratic Party is the only party standing up for democracy right now.

Next week, the Senate will have this debate. Democrats will bring forward legislation to protect voting rights and safeguard our democracy, and we are going to see where everyone stands—everyone.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2093

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2093) to expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence of big money in politics, strengthen ethics rules for public servants, and implement other anti-corruption measures for the purpose of fortifying our democracy, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in order to place the bill on the calendar

under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, next week, as the Democratic leader has indicated, the Senate will finally get the opportunity to vote on the bill that House and Senate Democrats have both made their No. 1 priority for the entire Congress. S. 1 is a bad bill filled with bad ideas, and I have been crystal clear about opposing it from the very beginning.

But for Democrats themselves, coming up with a compelling rationale for this unprecedented political power grab has been a long and winding road. It started back in 2019. Then, our friends on the left were still trying to wrap their heads around a stunning defeat in the 2016 Presidential election, so the Speaker of the House billed H.R. 1 as a major overhaul for what her party concluded was a profoundly broken democracy.

Then, 2020 changed everything. A Democrat actually won the White House. I guess our democracy wasn't broken after all. This time, apparently, Federal authorities just needed urgent protection from State legislatures running their own elections.

So we are talking about fundamentally the very same bill. And one thing is for certain: Major overhaul doesn't even begin—begin—to describe it. The awful guts are all in there.

There is the plan to forcibly rewrite large portions of the 50 States' respective election laws and the plan to create new, publicly funded accounts not for building roads or bridges, expanding rural broadband, or fighting the opioid epidemic, but just piles of Federal dollars going to yard signs, balloons, and TV ads for candidates at least half of Americans disagree with.

There is the plan to trash a decades-old, bipartisan consensus on the right way to call balls and strikes on elections and turn the even split of the Federal Election Commission into a partisan majority and the one to give that majority new and broader tools

for chilling the rights of citizens to engage in political speech it doesn't like.

It is such a radical proposal that even prominent voices on the left have urged caution. Lawyers from ACLU, no less, have sounded the alarm on its proposed encroachment on free speech. One liberal expert went further, saying that if Democrats think their bill is "essential to secure democracy, they are self-deceived or deceitful." And voters themselves are hardly convinced. When asked about election policies like voter ID, large—large—majorities consistently come down on the opposite side of Washington Democrats. The bill is so transparently opportunistic, the Democrats' spin has failed to even unite their own party here in the Senate. It is a massive takeover of our election system with a fill-in-the-blank rationale. Nobody is fooled, and next week, the Senate will reject it.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on another matter entirely, the House of Representatives will vote today on a bill from Representative BARBARA LEE to repeal one of the key authorities behind nearly two decades of U.S. efforts to fight terrorism: the 2002 authorization for the use of military force. House Democrats claim this vote is an urgent act of congressional oversight, and the Democratic leader has indicated the Senate will take it up with similar zeal.

The right way to address ongoing terrorist threats is a debate certainly worth having. I would have welcomed that debate before the Biden administration began its hasty retreat from Afghanistan without a plan to sustain counterterror missions or support our friends. It is one we should have before we vote to repeal these authorities. Reality is more complicated, more dangerous, and less politically convenient than its supporters actually believe.

The fact is, the legal and practical application of the 2002 AUMF extends far beyond the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime, and tossing it aside without answering real questions about our ongoing efforts in the region is reckless.

So let's clear up some facts. The 2002 AUMF has been understood for years—years—to apply to a variety of threats emanating from Iraq. Administrations of both parties have cited it as an important legal foundation of our fight against ISIS. It has been used precisely because the ISIS caliphate that stretched into Syria emanated from Iraq after President Obama's withdrawal in 2011.

The 2002 AUMF is important in Iraq today because it provides authority for U.S. forces there to defend themselves from a variety of real, exigent threats. It is arguably even more important in Syria, where our personnel are present against the wishes of the brutal Assad regime, supporting local Kurdish and

Arab forces and conducting strikes against ISIS. And because ISIS and al-Qaida have sometimes diverged, legal analysts have suggested that the 2001 AUMF alone may be insufficient to authorize operations against ISIS.

Do supporters of this repeal fully understand the ways it might limit counterterrorism missions? How about cyber ops? How about support for Kurdish and Arab forces in Syria? How do they propose we respond to growing attacks against our forces and interests in Iraq?

What about the prospects for robust congressional oversight if the President is left to rely on unilateral article II authorities or even less transparent ones? We are learning a lesson in real time about withdrawing from Afghanistan without a plan. We shouldn't make the same mistake here. So I suspect this isn't really about reasserting congressional oversight. After all, when the last administration announced plans to withdraw from Syria and Afghanistan in 2019, two dozen Democrats joined my amendment opposing the decision and reasserting our role in foreign policy. But now, many of our colleagues no longer want to talk about what we should be doing to confront these ongoing threats.

A lot can happen in 2 years, I guess. The political winds have certainly changed. But one thing hasn't changed: The grave threats posed by ISIS, al-Qaida, and other terrorist groups are as real as they have ever been, and repealing AUMFs without agreeing on a set of new authorities up front will only lead to more uncertainty about what we are going to do about them.

For years, U.S. forces have been carefully handing more of the primary responsibilities for counterterrorism to brave local partners. Under the last administration, this allowed our military footprint in Iraq and Syria to shrink dramatically. But the only reason that worked is because our partners have been able to trust that the U.S. military is still authorized to back them up. Today, House Democrats intend to rip out one of the key authorities underpinning that trust.

As I understand it, Democrats don't even intend to stop there. They are also planning to take aim at the 2001 authorities that allow us to keep some of the most dangerous terrorists alive from taking more innocent American lives. The administration says it is looking into how best to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, that houses the absolute—absolute—worst of the worst, including Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the September 11 attack. But thus far, the administration is rather short on details. How does the President plan to do this? Does he intend to break the law and bring terrorists to the United States? Give them expanded legal rights? Further radicalize our prison population? Talk about domestic violent extremism. Or does the President intend to send KSM and his